



# Inclusive Communications

A guide for communicating with,  
about and for people with  
disabilities



easy  
read



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In this easy read document, difficult words are in **bold**. We explain what these words mean in the sentence after they have been used.



Some words are blue and underlined. These are links which will go to another website which has more information.

# Introduction



The United Nations is an organization made up of many countries working together. We work to make the world a safer and better place.



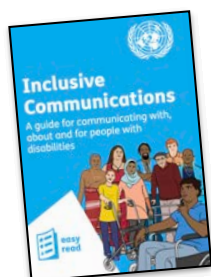
In 2019, we wrote our Disability Inclusion Strategy. It is a plan for all parts of the United Nations to include people with disabilities in the work we do.



To include people with disabilities, we need to communicate in ways that everyone can understand.



We have written guidelines for all our United Nations staff, to help them understand how to communicate with, about and for people with disabilities.



This is an Easy Read version of the guidelines.



## People with disabilities

Different countries use different ways of talking about people with disabilities.



In some countries you say:

- disabled people, or
- people with disabilities.

In this Easy Read document we are saying 'people with disabilities'.



# Who are people with disabilities?



People with disabilities have a long term condition.

People with disabilities often face barriers which mean they are not able to join in with everyday life.



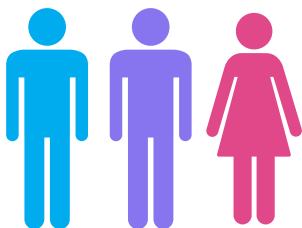
## Discrimination

People with disabilities face a lot of **discrimination**.

**Discrimination** is when you are treated badly or unfairly because of things like:



- your disability



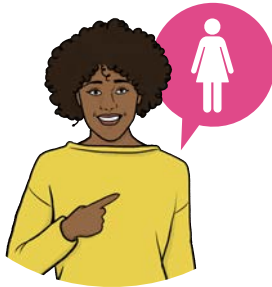
- your sex



- your race



- your age



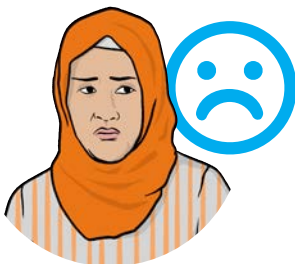
- your gender identity - this is if you like to be known as male, female or something else



- your sexual orientation - this means whether you are gay or straight, or something else



- your beliefs.



People with disabilities already face discrimination, but can face even more because of these differences.

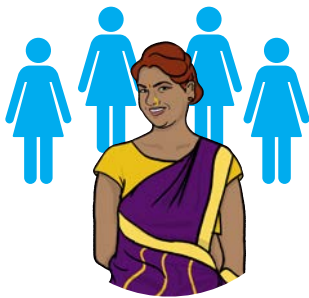


## People with disabilities

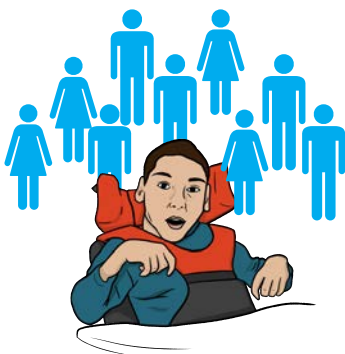
Over 1 billion people in the world have a disability. That is nearly 7 people in every 100 people.



Nearly half of all people in the world over age 60 have a disability.



About 1 in every 5 women will be disabled at some time in their life.



About 1 in every 10 children has a disability.

# Communicating in a way that everyone can understand



All of our United Nations staff should think about people with disabilities when they communicate.

They should think about the person, not the disability.

## Avoid stereotypes



A **stereotype** is when you think that everyone in a group of people is the same. Stereotypes are often wrong.



For example, a stereotype might be that people with disabilities:

- can't do things and if they do, they are very brave
- are people we should feel sorry for.



These stereotypes stop people with disabilities from doing what they want.

# Ways of talking about people with disabilities

People with disabilities should not be seen as:



- difficult to look after



- having a less useful life than other people



- dangerous



- unusual or amazing



- heroes.



# Ways of thinking about disability



People think about disability in different ways.

## Charity



**Charity** is when you give people help or money when they are in need.

Some people think that people with disabilities should be given charity instead of equal rights.



## Medical

Some people think that people with disabilities have something wrong with them. They send people to hospitals to try to cure them.



## Social

Other people think that the way we do things for people with disabilities is not right. Society needs to change so people with disabilities can join in like everyone else.



## Human rights

**Human rights** are the things that everybody should be allowed to have.

We need to give people with disabilities their rights, like everyone else, and respect their rights.

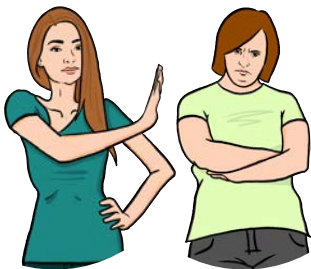


This is the way that we think about people with disabilities at the United Nations.



## Ableism

**Ableism** is when people think that people with disabilities are less important than other people.



With ableism people with disabilities are treated badly.

We need to stop ableism so that people with disabilities are treated equally and fairly.

# Positive stories



When we are writing about people with disabilities, we should tell stories that:

- are fair to everyone
- are positive about people with disabilities
- inspire a change for the better.

Talk about people's rights.



Focus on the answers to problems.



If we are writing about people with disabilities, we should involve them in writing the story.



## Everyday roles

A **role** is how someone fits into their own community.

Most people with disabilities have an everyday role. They should be shown as part of a family, having friends, and doing work.

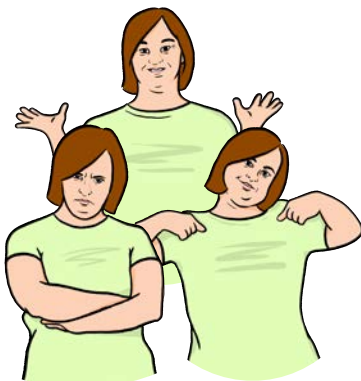


## Be truthful

When we write about people with disabilities, we should be honest about what they do and how they really live.



In our stories, we should let people with disabilities be themselves.



Let them be funny, or sad, or excited, or fed up, just like anyone else.

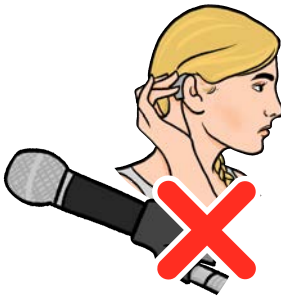
## The way we communicate should be accessible



**Accessible** means it is easy to use and suitable for people with different needs.



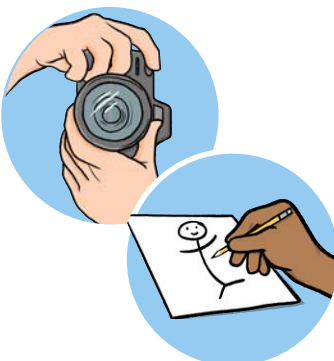
We might have to share our stories in a few different ways to make sure they reach the right people.



If we communicate by radio and microphones, it's not good for deaf people.



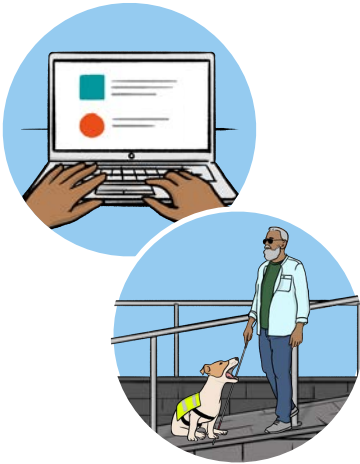
If we send text messages, which are good for deaf people, they may not be good for blind people.



Pictures or cartoons may be good for different types of people.



## Making reasonable changes



When we work with people with disabilities on our stories, we may have to make **reasonable changes**.

**Reasonable changes** are small changes that are made so the person with disability can take part in the same way as everyone else.

## Check first with people with disabilities



We should only write about someone's disability if we have permission to do so.

People need to give their permission before we write about them.

## Use cartoons, photos and films



Using cartoons, photos and films is a great way to tell stories about people with disabilities.

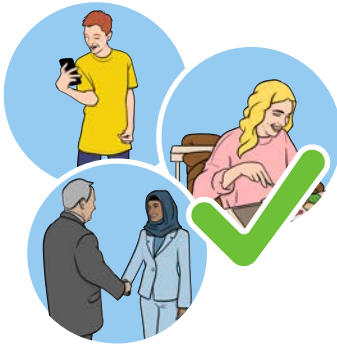


But we should:

- show that there are lots of different types of people with disabilities



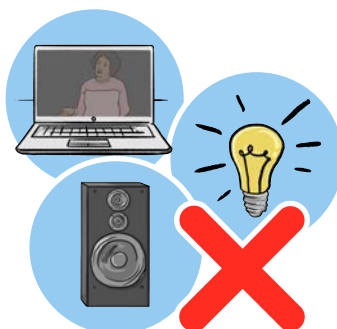
- focus on the person, not their disability



- show people in lots of everyday situations, doing many different things



- make sure people with disabilities are shown in films in the same way as other people



- avoid dark lighting, or flashing lights or loud noises.



## Written stories

When we are writing stories, we must not use words that may offend people.

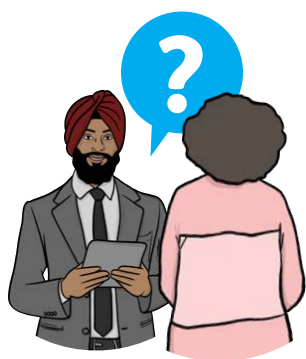


The United Nations uses many different languages to communicate and share information.



The United Nations has information about the best ways to talk about people with disabilities in all different languages.

# Talking to people with disabilities



## Things United Nations staff should do

We should:

- ask people with disabilities what they need to access things



- treat all adults as adults



- speak directly to the person, not to their sign language interpreter or personal assistant



- ask questions when we don't know what to do



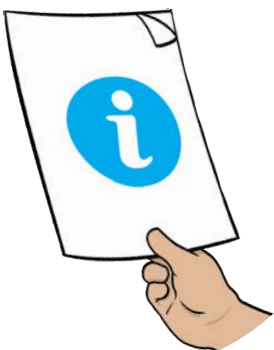
- wait for people with disabilities to ask for help. Do what they ask for



- say 'hello' and our name before putting out our hand to greet a person who is blind or has low vision. We also shouldn't just walk away without letting them know



- ask people who are blind or have low vision if they would like to take our arm or elbow. We should never touch someone or take their arm without asking



- make sure people have the information they need for a meeting beforehand.

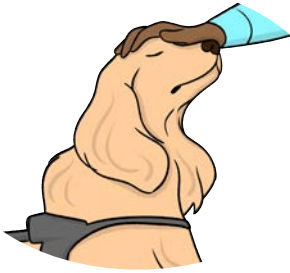


## Things our staff should not do



We should not:

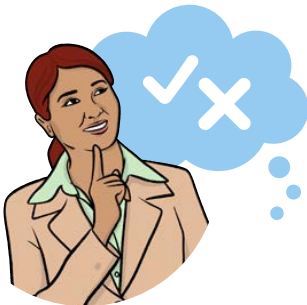
- ask questions about a person's disability unless they talk about it first



- distract or stroke guide dogs - they are working



- assume that people with disabilities think about their disability the same way we do

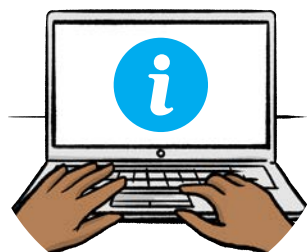


- guess what people with disabilities can and can't do



- remove a person's cane or guide dog, or lean on someone's wheelchair, or move a person's mobility device.

# Accessible information online



There are rules about making information online accessible.



These rules are important. They mean that our information can be read by lots of different people.



If we provide information in only one way, it might be difficult for some people.



We should try to make the information available in a few different ways.



Woman at doctor's appointment

## Making pictures accessible

We can make pictures accessible to people who have difficulty seeing by adding some **alt text**.



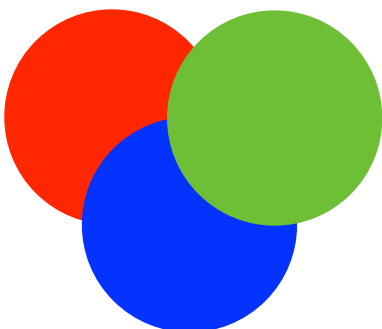
**Alt text** is some words to describe the picture. The words are hidden, but can be read out to people using a text reading device.



We don't need alt text if the picture is just explaining information that is already written on the page.



Logos should have alt text.



## Colour contrast

We should choose colours that are very different from each other, so they stand out.

# Easy to read

Easy to read is also called Easy Read.

We should:

- use easy words in short sentences



- organise our documents in a way that makes them easy to understand

**Strong  
Font**

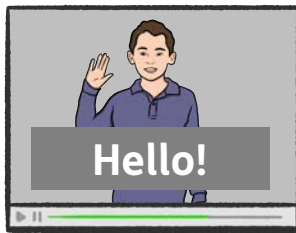
- choose a style of print that is easy to read



- have lots of white space, so it is easier to read the text.

# People with hearing difficulties

To make our information accessible to Deaf people and people with hearing difficulties, we could use some of these:



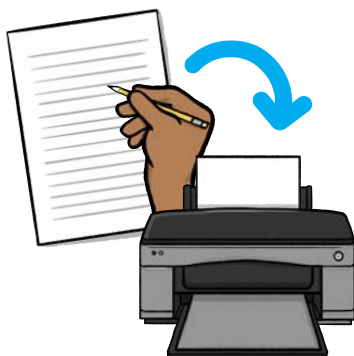
- Closed captions - this is a text version of the sounds and words being spoken on the film or video.



- Subtitles - these are on videos. They describe the spoken words on the film or video. They are also useful for people who don't understand the language being used.



- Hearing loops - these are devices we can put in meeting rooms that help people who use hearing aids.



- Transcripts - this is where someone writes down what people have said and prints it out for people to read after the meeting.





- Sign language.



- Make sure people can see who is speaking.



## Audio description

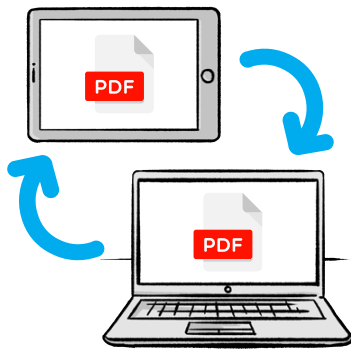
Audio description is where someone speaks about what is happening on the video, film or show.

## Computers

Most computer programmes that people use for typing documents have a way of checking that the document is accessible.

We should use this tool to check that our documents are accessible.





## PDFs

A **PDF** is a document stored on a computer.

There is a way to make our PDFs suitable for people who use screen readers to help them read. All our staff should do this.



## Websites and social media

There is a guide on making websites accessible here: [www.w3.org/TR/WCAG21/](http://www.w3.org/TR/WCAG21/)



There is a guide on making accessible United Nations websites here: [www.un.org/en/webaccessibility/index.shtml](http://www.un.org/en/webaccessibility/index.shtml)



We should check how to make things accessible on the social media site that is being used. They are all different.



## Online meetings

Too many meetings are not accessible to people with disabilities. Small changes can help with this.

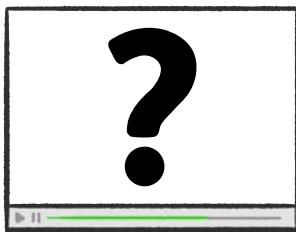
We can:



- send out accessible information before the meeting, so everyone knows what will happen there



- ask people who are taking part how we can make things accessible for them



- find out if the video software we are using is accessible



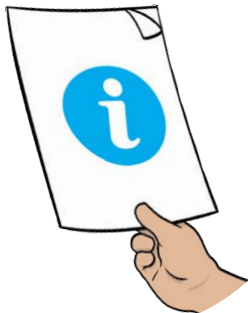
- explain how the people taking part can turn on closed captions, if they are available



- ask people to say their name before they speak

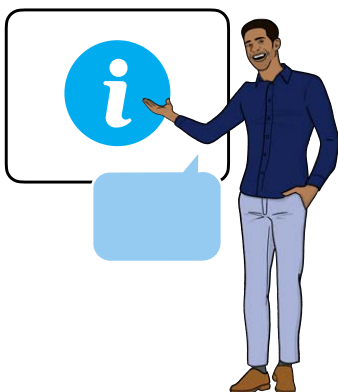


- record the meeting and give people transcripts afterwards.



## Face-to-face meetings

Information should be given out to suit people with different needs.



If we are showing slides in the meeting, we should say what is on them.



We should:

- ask people who are taking part what they need for the meeting to be accessible, and provide this



- have a quiet space for anyone who wants to take a break



- make sure the room and venue are accessible



- make sure the sign language interpreter stands close to the person who is speaking



- make sure any technology being used is accessible



- record the meeting and give people transcripts afterwards.

## Exhibitions and showing films



An **exhibition** is an event where you show something interesting to people.



Our United Nations films and exhibitions should:

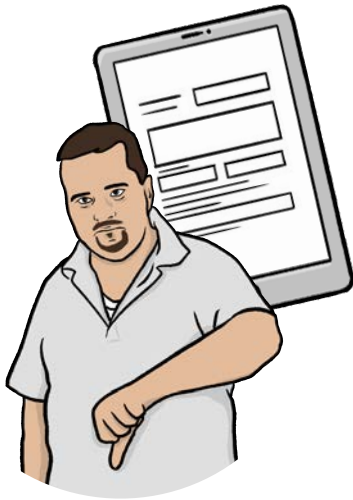
- show people with disabilities



- avoid stereotypes



- be accessible.



## Collecting information online

Information is often collected online, for example in surveys.

Online surveys are not always accessible to people with disabilities.



We should:

- make sure the survey has accessible options, like video for sign language or questions people can hear
- make sure the survey is easy to understand
- get people with disabilities to try out the survey to see if it is okay







- make sure the survey takes no longer than 20 minutes to fill in



- explain what the survey is for and ask people if it is okay for us to use their answers



- offer different ways of filling in the survey, not just online



- think about other ways to collect information, like meetings



- let the people who took part know what the results were.

# For more information



For more information please go to the United Nations website:

[www.un.org/en/content/disabilitystrategy/](http://www.un.org/en/content/disabilitystrategy/)